

THE LOFT

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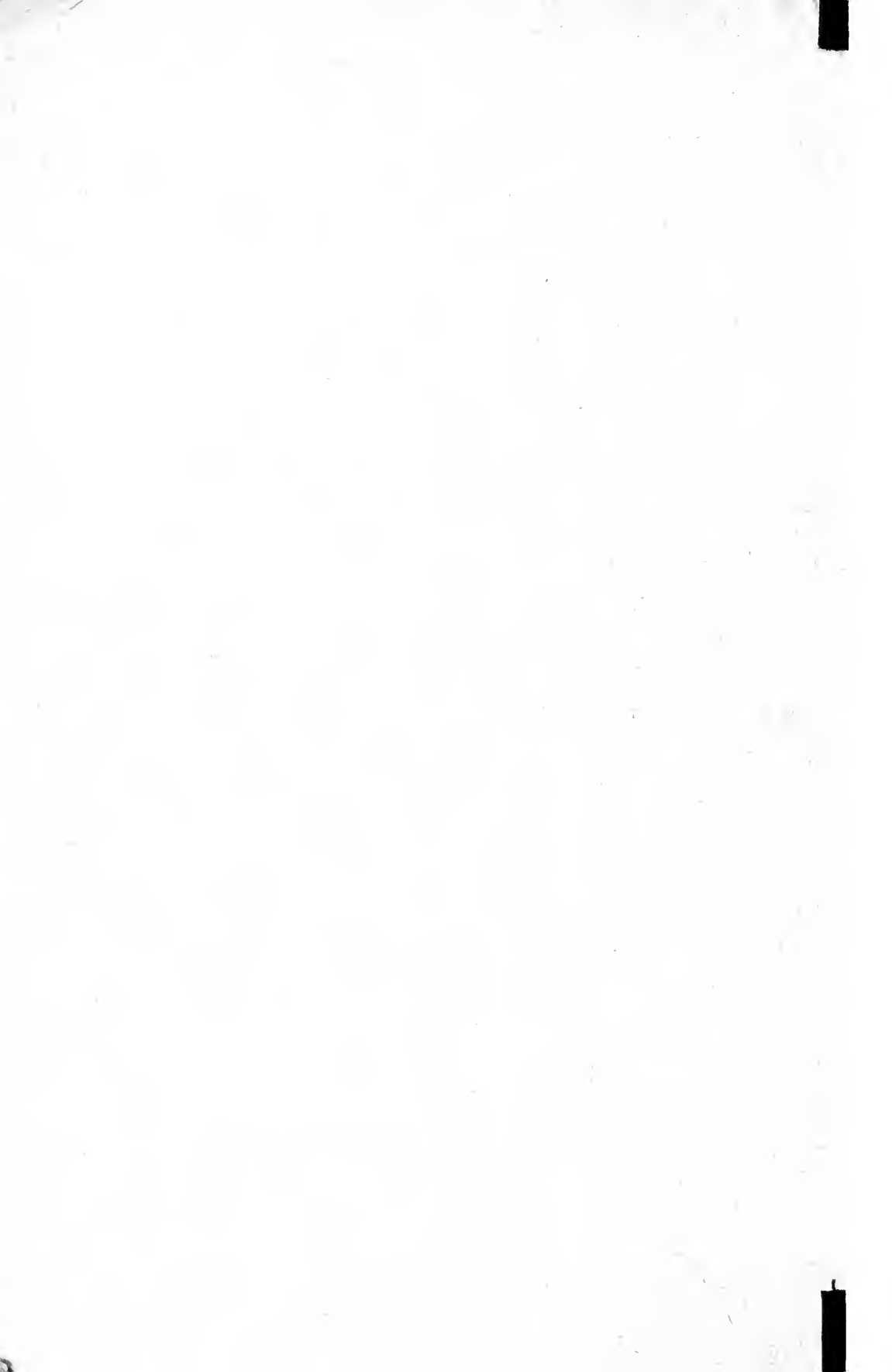
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The **LOFT**



*Dedicated to the Dignity of Man
and Man's work.*



The LOFT

Volume 2, Number 1

1968 - 1969

ROCK VALLEY COLLEGE
Rockford, Illinois

Student Publication of Prose, Poetry and Art

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MAGAZINE STAFF

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Mike R. Schafer

THANATOPSIS TWO

Jerry Clark

Colonnades of concrete
with flesh

make th valley and the shadow

soft and silent I walk

picking flowers in an asphalt meadow.

Flashback!
Memory!
Freckled naivete
so lost and far away
souls searching for answers but
nothing I can say,

the girlwoman has gone
beautiful brown hair and long

Caught in a prismic prison
pierced by rays of light
one in a bit of soul and satisfaction
err-placed by the night.

Big black tax-
i (e)
and
velvet.
curtains hide the sun, reminded of
the morn and all to be done.

BURIAL,
baby,
plant hopeless seeds (mouldy germination--6 feet)
The irreverent reverend,
the referee-he says a few words (too few)
He's got dirty fingernails
and vaseline.

LIFE.
The short spurt of.
ORGASM!

The post peace prevailing is heaven/
Hell-
o, Oh!

indubitably and forevermore
henceforth and so on . varily
i say unto thee, undoubtedly
i remain (come again?)
(i. e. i remain posthumously yours jc)



Liz Nuciforb

An Open Letter To An Assassin

To whom it may concern:

No matter what you think, Martin Luther King did not die from your bullet on the evening of April 4, 1968. If you hear some nasty rumors disputing this fact, do not believe them. Just because he can no longer speak does not mean his familiar voice resounding with justice and truth will now remain forever silent. Just because his heart has stopped pumping the red blood common to all humanity does not mean the thoughts and feelings this one man has instilled in the minds of millions will cease to flow, too. And finally, just because a mule drawn cart has led him to his final resting place does not mean his race, the race he devoted his life to, will always be a down-trodden pack of ignorant beasts of burden, misfitted in a world of holier-than-thou mares and jackasses.

For the life of me, I cannot see what you even hoped to accomplish by killing Martin Luther King. More that likely, you did it to further your campaign against the Negroes as a race, rather than a climax of your hostilities aimed personally at Mr. King himself. But if this is the case, I'm afraid all you have done is further the Negroes cause, for now you have made him a martyr and that is the worst possible thing you could have done. Your big mistake was you forgot Martin Luther King was not just a man; he was a symbol and you cannot physically kill a symbol. You can murder all the major believers of a symbol, you can destroy these believers' homes and places of business, but you still cannot stamp out the symbol itself. Mr. King was a symbol of many things to many different people. Optimistically, I believe to a good proportion of people, both black and white, he stood for equality, justice, hope and truth. But to a minority of both races, he stood for only trouble, fear, violence and even death. It is evident which group you happen to fall in, for since the moment you fired that shot you were branded if only in your own conscience, as a human being possessing little or no sympathy for your fellow man.

Personally, it is you and all like you for whom I feel the pity. Oh, yes, I feel compassionate toward Mr. King's family and dedicated followers, for they have lost someone they loved. But what must be remembered is they have not lost their symbol. Gradually, the symbol will pick itself up, wash it's wounds and resume fighting it's war against ignorance, prejudice and poverty, as it has done for so many years. The symbol will probably manifest itself in a new body--maybe even in a white one--but no matter who is destined to carry the blackened torch of liberty, the symbol has only been strengthened, not weakened, with undeserved thanks to you.

Kristine Leonard

But you, it is you I am worried about. You are blind and do not know it. Can't you look beyond a person's skin color and see he is really no different from you--that he has the same human wants and needs of hunger, thirst, love and understanding as you do? You are deaf and apparently cannot hear the unanswered cries of justified discontent. Your sense of smell must have left you some time ago or you would have smelt the burnt flesh of innocent human beings sacrificed in the riots triggered by your own gun and others before you. Can you, also, no longer feel multitudes of people, not so unlike yourself, reach out and touch your more capable hands for help? And is the bitter taste of hatred so great in your mouth you can no longer enjoy the sweetness of life, and thus you want everyone else to be miserable too?

You do not have to refute these statements and questions because you have already answered them with the haunting echo of your gunshot that was able to drown out the entire Viet Nam War. I will not lecture you nor press any more of my feelings upon you because I know I would be just wasting paper. But before I leave you to burn in your own hell of self-exaltation brought on by your act of stupidity and perhaps insanity, I would like to leave you with just one last thought. Don't you know great men do not die? They simply pass on to bigger and better things. And don't you know that a man's seeds of thought aren't buried with him? Instead they seem to sprout up like flowers on his grave, just waiting for the right people to come along, pick them, and carry them on where he left off. And although it is possible to bury even great men, you can never bury great dreams. They will only be resown again in the minds of other great men and someday, despite all the traditional, ever-present hazzards, the dreams will reach maturity and be harvested. Then all of God's pilgrims, black and white, will truly have cause for thanksgiving.

A PURCHASE

Jeff Swanberg

Seduced by flashing lights,
I journey within the shop of china.
About me, the wares mirror my reflection.
Prices affixed,
I barter with my mind.
My collection begins.

Seeking purity amongst the mass,
I touch the articles displayed.
Examining the painted and cracked impressions,
Finding them cheap and secondhand,
I withdraw silently, ashamed.
I set out to improve my collection.

Suffering and searching in unison,
After countless miles, a quiet shop catches my eye.
Softly, I step inside and enter an atmosphere of innocence.
Affirming the price after the sun has set,
I purchase the last of my collection.

Feeling the precious gift,
I notice the pureness of its texture.
Satisfied, I reap the benefits of my exhausting search.
Like a still pond, the delicate face reflects mine.
Gliding over the gold-rimmed edge, and into the center,
I reach my goal and caress the sought after possession.

THE INVASION OF SNOW

Duncan

The overcast sky foretells the coming battle. Aloft, the forces of Winter are making ready...

Below, snug and secure in its dry warmth, waits the confident Earth ...

The invasion begins:

The very first snowflake drifts down, a bold advance scout.

It strikes the Earth, a momentary Star of David against the ground, to be melted and absorbed.

But already other snowflakes are descending, like suicide soldiers who hurl themselves on an enemy's guns. Every one that hits the ground melts, soaking the ground, bringing the soil ever closer to its satiety point.

As if by a set signal, a wind whips up, dashing numerous snowflakes against the trees, which are soon all white on one side, making the opposite sides look like shadows against bright light.

Another wave of snow-troops lands and melts; so does the next wave, and the next.

But the main assault is on, and finally, snowflakes start to touch down without melting.

The beachhead has been secured: a toehold for victory.

Now bigger flakes fall, in countless numbers, like paratroopers.

Battalions, regiments, whole armies.

At last, the conquest is complete, and the character of the landscape has magically changed:

The vanquished Earth is ignominiously buried underneath foot-deep snowdrifts. And the once-blue sky above the leafless, snow-plastered trees is a milk-haze dream.

PINE

Finally, she thought! Sherry jumped from the chair as the doorbell rang, and went to the door to meet Rick, her date for the party. Her slender body moved easily through the hallway and down the narrow staircase of the apartment. The short summer was almost over and fall was creeping up with it's dark, damp days. Thoughts of the coming evening raced through her mind; especially, thoughts of Rick.

He greeted her with a casual kiss on the cheek, and they climbed into his new car. As she sank into a plush leather seat, she glanced towards him and smiled. Tonight they were going to one of Rick's friends house for a while and then, Sherry supposed, to grab a bite to eat at the local drive-in. She knew that Rick put every dollar he earned towards his car payment, so she ate a large dinner before she left and would only order a Coke at the end of the evening.

Rick, a slight built boy with long dark hair and green eyes, had been thinking of the night now at hand all week. He knew Sherry was not the type of girl to be dealt with easily. As he quickly shifted gears, he wondered to himself how hard he would have to work for what he was after. She was only human.

Rick had known Sherry for a little over a year, and had gotten no further than an elaborate kiss, and casual caressment of her small but maturing breasts. Anything else, and she refused him. Tonight Rick wanted her completely.

They pulled up in front of Rick's friend's house and went to the door hand in hand. No lights were on as they peered in the side door after Rick knocked twice. Inside, one of the guests heard the knock and sauntered towards the door over the bodies that were clustered on the floor like mounds of spilled ceiling plaster. As the door swung open the smell of beer and smoke met the new arrivals. The stench of marijuana, along with the sweet smell of incense, gave a mystic aroma to the atmosphere.

Sherry unaware that it was going to be a party of this nature, seemed unsure of herself as Rick pulled her in. His hand firmly clutched her's as he was not about to let an opportunity like this escape him. Sherry, having graduated from high school two months ago, was ready to start living the life of a young lady he thought. Now was as good a time as any to start.

They went into the kitchen, the only room in the house that had any lights on. At least, she thought, she could be safe in here for a while. Sherry prayed to herself that Rick would respect her wishes. She did not want any trouble, and hoped that Rick would stay away from anything that might lead to it. Including her body.

The first thing Rick thought of was picking up two beers from the cooler. He opened them, hoping that she wouldn't refuse. He offered it to her and she accepted without thanking him.

They drank their beer in silence. Before she had time to look back at Rick, he had finished his and was back with another. Sherry felt that she was old enough to take care of herself, and Rick too.

Jeff Swanberg

Rick glanced towards her, eyeing her tender body with pleasure. Tonight, he thought, would be the night he had been longing for, ever since they had first met. Yes, tonight he would make his move. Rick drank his beer rapidly, and went for another.

As he stepped towards the cooler, Sherry spoke to him. Just as Rick had expected she would, Sherry voiced her strong disagreement on the drinking that was taking place. He didn't listen, but instead, shyed away from her and took another swallow of the warm beer. When Rick finished it, he began to concentrate on the rest of the night.

He took her by the hand and casually led her towards the bedrooms. She stopped at the door to the first one they came to, and refused to enter. Her refusal accomplished nothing, as Rick forced her on the bed.

Sherry frantically groped in the darkness for the lamp next to the bed that she had seen upon entering the room. Light pierced their eyes as she found the switch. Her hand fell on the night stand near the edge of the bed, coming to rest on a large dust covered Bible. A hand print remained as she fell back on the bed.

Rick was already making his presence known and she relaxed a little as his gentle kisses found their way about her neck. Slowly she lifted her arm and turned out the lamp. The beer and Rick's fondling over her was starting to take effect. This was to be her last night as a little girl.

Sherry woke up with a fear that she had never known; Rick, was gone! Out in the kitchen, he sipped on a fresh beer. The clock's hands showed three o'clock and Sherry was supposed to have been home two hours ago. Her parents would be furious . . . so would she. Then, out of the corner of his eye, Rick saw her emerge into the dim smokey kitchen. Her long shiny hair, now tangled and snarled, with her sweater hanging loosely over her slim figure, presented an image of defeat.

Slowly, they walked out of the house into the chilling air of the early morning. As they drove home, the radio played softly and Sherry cried to herself. Rick looked blankly at the green light in front of him.

As Rick approached her house, he suggested that they go to the quarry on the out-skirts of town on the following day to discuss the incident that had just taken place. There they could be alone and have time to think. She agreed, turning away from his good-night kiss at the door to the apartment.

Sherry laid on her bed, her mind wandering about in a confused pattern, thinking of the day ahead and of the episode that had just taken place. She drifted from reality and soon found herself in a restless sleep.

At noon, Rick knocked on the door and Sherry answered. She stood and looked into his eyes, searching for an answer. Seeing his shy guilty eyes looking into her own, she quickly turned away. He knew why. Briskly they walked to the car, with no words cutting the air between them. He drove towards the seclusion of the quarry.

Jeff Swanberg

Rick parked the car on the worn, dusty road, and they walked into the woods that were hiding the site of the quarry. The ride out had been a silent one, with only the sound of the powerful engine disturbing the stillness.

The argument started as soon as the couple approached the abandoned pit, and it wasn't long before Sherry left Rick sitting alone. She sat, high over the shallow pool of murky water, atop a bleak and deserted mountain of sand and gravel. The chilling September wind blew her waist length auburn hair in a thousand directions, as icy tears swelled in her deep brown eyes.

Beneath her, near a stagnant shallow pool, Rick stood tossing bits of sand and stone into the water, causing the mirror-like surface to ripple complacently about his feet.

Staring into the desolate fall sky, Sherry could only concentrate on the form below her, ignoring the sirene beauty of the colorful hues of the leaves about her feet. He had hurt her time and again, and had now brought their relationship to a dramatic climax. They pondered the thought deep in the confines of her mind. How was she to face the end of all that had meant the world to her? She sat thinking ...in a death-like silence.

Tired of tossing stones, Rick sat in the cold, damp sand near the edge of the pool. Did he actually want what he had now possessed for a matter of hours? His possession was now complete.

For an instant, he felt the sudden surge of power that comes to one after a great victory. Turning upwards to witness his captive, he suddenly felt the strength and glory drain from his body. He noticed the girl's face at the top of the hill, and caught the sun's reflection of a teardrop on her cheek. Quickly he turned and faced the still, now mirror-like pool beside him. The ripples that he had made had since vanished from view. The shallow, once stormy water was now still and peaceful. He gazed onto the surface for many moments.

A small twig that had weathered the rough water off shore, was now gliding over the smooth surface. Suddenly, out of the north, a cold wind started to stir the water. The ship-like twig once again tried to fight off the storm, but to no avail. It's bark was too saturated with the murky water to float. Slowly, it sank into the dark water. It fell from Rick's gazing eyes, lost forever amid the other depths of the pond.

Rick, turning once again to the top of the hill, noticed that Sherry had disappeared. He sat for a moment, stunned by the impact of her absence.

Frantically, he scrambled up the sand and gravel mound. Seconds later, he stood at the top, looking into the forest of pine surrounding him. The sweet smell of fresh pine-sap was a refreshing odor compared to the stagnant smell that he had been breathing a few moments ago.

Slowly he started to walk towards the towering pines, and in a few moments was within their confines. Wandering about for what seemed like endless hours, he located the girl. She lay in a bed of soft needles, weeping gently. Ever so softly Rick bent to kiss her tear-stained cheek. He tasted the salty tears as his lips pressed against her face.

Jeff Swanberg

Gently, laying down beside her, he pressed his body against hers, as the cool September wind ceased to blow through the trees. Again, Rick felt the supreme urge within his body; only this time, it was different than any he had ever felt before. It was sincere feeling of love and respect for the girl beside him.

Sherry had now stopped her weeping, and was slowly starting to respond to his warmth and kisses. She returned his display of affection with a meaningful smile, and soft caressment of his body. She seemed to sense his sincere efforts to try and console her torn feelings.

The sun, peering over the tree tops, cast a sudden ray of warmth upon the couple as it started to set and become lost from view. Slowly, Rick arose to his feet, bringing Sherry up with him. The manger of needles that had served as a resting place, made no sound as the couple walked back to the quarry, and down the dusty path which led to the car and home.



Diane Zuck

KNOWLEDGE

Diana Jamison

green walk-lights shiveringly
blink permission to hasty pedestrians,
 (few of them add texture to near-even snow),
putting verdantly silver light
to the surface of my searching window;
and sometimes RED and maybe YELLOW.
who is it draws the shade while I am gone?

REALITY

Tamara A. Kletecka

Politically speaking,
You are all equal,
Eligible to run for the presidency.

Ethically speaking
You are all endowed
With certain unalienable rights

Practically speaking,
Consider the Jews, the Czechs,
Consider Christ.

How low did they crawl?
How high did they scale?
How long will they campaign?



Jan Hartzell

SALVATION

J. Clark

Swimming in the light of dawn
(will you remember me?)
Cast upon a shadow called morn
(can you hear my plea?)

Satan's soul sacrifice
symbolic of my sins
I'm wrecked upon this rocky shore
(here's where death begins)

I came
I saw
I wanted
but without God on my side
I paid twice for this ticket
and got this Hell's ride.

Love reached my soul and taught me
to repent all of my sins
I came upon the House of my Lord
(Here's where Life begins)

Salvation clears a foggy mind
and pacifies your soul
Now you find where you're going
and strive to meet your goal.

Drowning in the dark of night
one last beat of the heart
They say I'm done, I'm finished
but this is only the start.

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Paul Dailey
Ronald Labunski

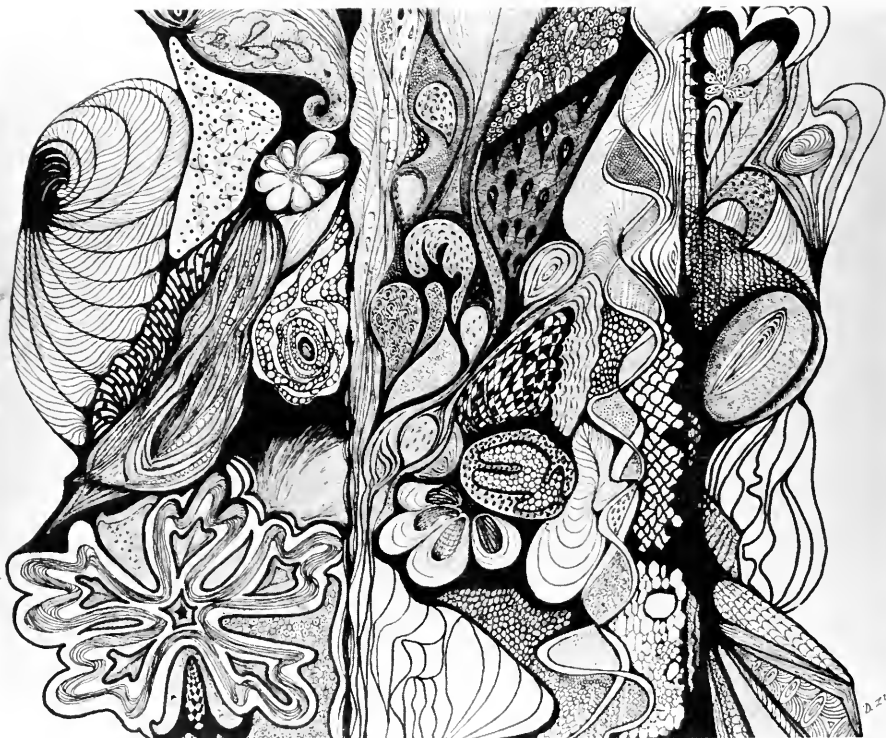
Dan Carter

ANGELS

The tall, gangling youth lazily straddled his motorcycle. His gaunt body was covered by a ragged pair of levi's that barely touched the worn tops of his dusty, black boots and a faded, blue denim jacket which hung loosely around his slumped shoulders. A pair of sun-glasses and a large iron cross completed the outfit of this "angry young man". His sun-bleached hair was swept back by the wind and gave him a look of defiance.

As he rode his machine through town, everyone stopped what they were doing and stared knowingly at him. He was obviously a vandal, an outcast of society, a maniac on a motorcycle. His deeds were remembered by the townspeople who wondered where he was bound for now. He was probably going to a rendezvous of all the delinquents in the area in order to participate in either a gang fight or an orgy- either of which would lead to pillaging and probably to drunkenness and more use of narcotics.

Everyone knew what this youth stood for, and they all cursed him under their breath as they watched him ride out of sight. After their nostrils were free of the rider's stench, the people entered their churches and thanked their Gods for the patience and understanding which had been given to them.



Diane Zuck

20th CENTURY MAN

Tamara A. Kletecka

Neon lights of artificiality....
Man-made, chemically recreated
Trying to shed fleeting light
On the dimming end.

THE JANUARY 1969 MAN

Mike Burns

The new man has just begun,
Hallelujah

"Peace is forthcoming", he says,
Hallelujah.....

But in Act Three, bombs still fall,
Hallelujah.....

And the people still taste death,
Hallelujah.....



Dan Hairott

A WHAT?

The English language, as spoken in America today, uses descriptive phrases and words with multiple meanings, that could cause tremendous difficulties to a new student of our tongue. Pity the newcomer who must learn to speak with and understand us, and pity also his instructor who must explain our mis-use of words.

Imagine if possible, what creature might be expected if he was described as being a "green-horn", or as having a "green thumb". Our newcomer would probably be expecting a unicorn with an advanced case of gangrene. And if he were further described as being "rotten to the core", a funeral bouquet might be on order.

Any proud American would want a guest to be made welcome, and so an offer might be made to show him around. An arrangement is made to meet at the green. Chances are excellent that he will never show up. After travelling across town to the park, only to be directed to the outlying golf course, he will probably be too tired and confused to seek out the town common where his would-be guide has been waiting on a bench, progressively darkening his thoughts with the passage of time.

But a second invitation is issued, and our guide takes his guest to dinner where a few explanations are in order. We drink coffee but sip tea, and using the same knife in identical motions, we carve meat but cut pie and slice cake.

Hosts frequently take visitors to tour the local zoo, but our guest, I am sure, would prefer to see the human circus conjured up by our casual references to friends and neighbors. Descriptions such as he is game (a pheasant?), he is itching for a fight (dandruff or diaper rash?), or he is soaked to the gills evoke visions of creatures more unusual than any zoo has ever displayed. Also of interest would be people who are blue, chicken, puffed-up, bookworms, highbrows, mousy or crooked.

Yes, pity the new student of American English, but reserve a large portion of sympathy for his instructor. The task required of him might be the greater.



Noreen M. Bohn

A DREAM

Mary Powell

She woke from her bed
and stalked the dawn
Hoping she'll find
Someone in her mind

She followed the sun
Over the hill
Draped in dew
Looking for the person she knew

Off to her friends
Real and warm
Knowing she'll find
A moment of peace of mind

And what's to become
Of the love she owns
What's to become
Of her known

IN DARKNESS

Paul L. Carlson

When the light
was off
and I opened my eyes
the room was dark.
The darkness;
filled with thought,
memories and terror.
I saw a prophet
searching the walls
for a light
to guide man-kind,
He's still searching.

ROCK VALLEY COLLEGE



Gary Lau

SMILES

The people in this house don't like me. They make me sit in a corner and isolate me from any form of play. Look at them; there's Udehl, he's fixing the vacuum cleaner, and here comes Eva with the picture of Charles in his gas mask to show Viola. Grandma is in the bathroom cleaning her teeth and I'm left here all alone. At least they made me sit by the sliding glass door so I can watch that man next door cut his grass. Here he comes again with the power mower; that machine makes a lot of noise, but they won't even let me say hello to him. All that separates me from freedom is that glass door, but they won't even open it for me. If they don't like me why won't they let me go?

This sure is a dull place. I wish something would happen, any little thing out of the ordinary to relieve me from this boredom. The man with the mower is out of sight now and there's nothing for me to do but sleep and you can't even do that because of all those giants moving around. There isn't a bird in sight or any other creature. Everybody is busy but me.

I can't stand this another minute. There must be something I can do. Udehl is leaving now and maybe I can make a break for the door when he opens it. If I could just get out the door I could be down highway 51 before they even missed me. That road could take me to the airport and maybe a newfound friend would let me fly away with him, somewhere far away where I could run through a forest and feel the rain on my back and breath air that isn't stagnant. Maybe I could find a companion and then I wouldn't have to be alone anymore. Maybe. If.

But it's too late now. Udehl slipped out the door while I was daydreaming and here I sit. Is that the phone I hear? Thank God something finally happened. It's only a wrong number. (who'd want to call these people?) Oh well, at least it was some form of excitement. knock knock knock. Somebody is at the door! Oh boy!

"Larry! How are you?" (it's Larry in his Navy uniform.)

"I just dropped by, Eva, to see if Marilyn is here; I saw her car out front."

"She isn't here right now, Larry, but come in, Grandma is here."

Larry walks in the door. The phone rings again. Charles' alarm clock goes off (it's set to alarm every 9 minutes). The timer on the oven goes off. The clock radio starts to play. Thank God for modern conveniences. People rush in all directions. Larry left the door open. I bolt. It's great to run again.

I got as far as the stop sign before Larry caught up with me. He took me back to that awful place. He never would have caught me if I weren't so old. Couldn't he tell by the look in my eyes that in there I'm defeated and useless? Now it's back to the hours of sitting, if I can even sit down after the beating they gave me. Those few minutes of freedom were worth it though, even if I am a captive again. Next time I'll run a different way. If there is a next time.

Things sure are rough when you're a dog named SMILES.



John Berry

TWILIGHT

Cecil Anderson

The meadows stretch away into twilight;
The sun has set and the stars are shining.

I shall go through the twilight,
Across the meadows, to my love.
I shall not hurry, I shall not walk fast,
Through the dusk into the land of love.

I am drawn by a beckoning face
Into the land of love, into the enchanting light;
I will not hurry, I will not walk fast,
Through the twilight into the land of love.

I CRY

Paul L. Carlson

I cry because
I cannot cry
because I have
locked my heart away
and have lost
the key

I cry
because
like the salt
of death's tears,
life is bitter



Charles L. Larkin

THE HILL

The hill was steep and high. Wild grape vines, hazel brush and gnarled oak branches snapped against my face as I worked my way up the narrow path. My shoes slid on the dry grass. Little, loose stones gave way under the pressure of my weight, and my feet slipped on the waxy fallen leaves.

I paused for a moment to catch my breath when I reached the top. With the back of my hand I wiped the perspiration that trickled down the side of my cheeks; then I ambled on a dozen or more steps and sat down on a large, moss covered rock. A light breeze whispered through the sharp-scented pines. Delicate, lemon-yellow birch leaves mingled with crimson maple leaves fluttered to the ground, and the brown leaves on the tall oak trees added a rich luster to the tranquil setting.

High above, a hawk sailed lazily in a clear blue sky that was flecked with only a few wisps of white puffy clouds. On either side of the valley below there were rolling hills. The woods on some of the hills were dressed in the splendor of fiery, flaming red and yellow leaves. In the velvet maze there were more hills on either side of where the village lay nestled in the distance. The faint outline of one or two white church steeples appeared above the other rooftops that blended in with the dark blue haze. These others I could not recognize.

Occasionally the musical tinkle of a cowbell drifted across the valley from the hillside beyond where black and white cattle were contentedly grazing. They looked like someone had sprinkled a dash of salt and pepper on a faded green tablecloth. On a field below a shiny red tractor reflected the sunlight as it pulled a plow turning the fresh brown earth into straight furrows. Black smoke poured from the exhaust as it neared the top of a knoll.

Once before I had climbed this same hill. Then the trees were adorned with fresh green leaves and the apple tree below was bursting with fragrant pink blossoms. I had not been alone then. The spring air was brisk and crisp, and she had laughed when I said, "Your cheeks look like the apple blossoms."

Now the apples were red and ripe, ready to be squeezed into sweet, tantalizing cider. Surely, some would be baked into juicy, plump, golden pies with their spicy aroma awaiting the palates approval.

For a while I thought of how things might have been different if I would have never left this serene tranquility for the turmoil of the city. There was a crackle of leaves. A chipmunk had scampered up on an old weather beaten log besides me. His little black eyes peered at me quizzically. I reached in my coat pocket for some peanuts that I had brought along and tossed one to the jaunty little beggar. I smiled as he grabbed the peanut with his paws and put it in his mouth. He quickly turned and gleefully skidded away, skipping over the dry fallen branches to finish his rare tidbit in some secluded spot. "How free he is," I thought.

The sun was making its grand finale in a flaming glow of red above the distant hills. The tall trees standing like sentinels cast their lengthening shadows along the hillside. A low wind moaned through the pine boughs, and I buttoned my jacket to keep out the chill.

Lawrence E. Phillipson

Now the hawk was gracefully riding the air currents lower and lower. Suddenly, without warning he dipped, and in a split second dropped to the ground in a clearing at the edge of the trees below. He fumbled awkwardly for a moment, and clutched at something in the matted dead grass. Then he thrashed his grayish, dirty brown wings and triumphantly soared into the air. Squirming frantically in an attempt to escape the razor sharp talons was the little chipmunk. I watched until the predator with his prey became a mere speck in the horizon.

My shoulders sagged as I slowly arose and turned to leave. The brambles tugged and tore at my clothes as I inched my way down the winding path.



Noreen Bohn

THE OLD WINO

"Hello th-there," he stuttered, with a cloud nine expression on his face, "I need so-some g-gasoline."

"Yes sir," I said as I wiped off my greasy hands. "Fill her up?"

"M-might as well," he said, "p-put in regular, p-please."

I staggered back to the gas pump, and took a big breath of fresh air. "Boy," I thought, "I sure am glad I don't smoke, if flame ever got near his face he would turn into a human blowtorch!" I inserted the nozzle into the gas tank of the beat up old chevy and set the handle. "Should I check the oil?" I asked.

"Y-yes, please," he answered.

I opened the hood and pulled out the dip stick. I wiped the gritty, tarry oil off the stick and yelled around to him, "It's one quart low."

At that point he stuffed the cork back in his bottle of cheap wine, fumbled with the door handle, and finally managed to remove himself from his car. He bobbed around to the front of the car and said, "I-it sure is a clean little engine ain't it. Let the oil go. It's alright."

I walked back to the gas pump and finished filling the tank. "That will be four-fifty," I said.

"Here," he said, as he handed me a crumpled five dollar bill. "And don't forget the stamps and the game card."

I got him his change, stamps, and game card. Then he climbed back into his beat up old car, and left.

As he left, he said, "See you around." He smiled, and it was a smile that I had never expected to see on an adult, an orphan in an orphanage maybe, but not an adult.

I strolled toward the front door of the service station. It was a brand new station, so new that the huge front windows still glistened in the sunlight. The office area was inviting and well lighted. It was equipped with the usual candy, coke, and cigarette machines. Across one whole wall was shelves after shelves of cans, and bottles containing anything from windshield deicer to storage batteries. The service area consisted of two bays. In one bay there was a swing arm lift. Across the back wall were tires and tools of every variety.

There was a camping area and a lake not too far away, so we also sold a variety of fishing equipment, and firewood. It seemed like we sold more firewood than we did gasoline.

The most consistent feature of the gas station was Steve. Steve was my working partner. He was also the boss' son, and today the boss was gone.

Tom Farrow

Today Steve was parked in a comfortable lounge chair talking to his cousin Bill. Bill was standing nearby leaning against the candy machine. Steve was telling Bill all about what he planned to do to his car to make it go a little faster.

I walked in the front door.

"Hey Tom," said Steve sweetly. "How about loaning me a dime. I'm fresh out of fags and all I have is a quarter."

"Sure," I said. "Just as soon as you give me the forty cents I loaned you yesterday."

"Ah come on now," he pleaded. "Don't forget all the things I've done for you."

"Like what," I sneered.

"Oh Farrow, don't be such a candy-ass," butted in Bill.

"Here," I said, and flipped him a dime.

"Who was the old wino out there," questioned Steve. "He looked like a real ass."

Just then a customer pulled in. "Take this one, will you?" asked Steve, "I'm kind of busy right now." With that he pulled out a girly magazine and began thumbing through it. As I walked out the door I heard the muffled laugh of Bill.

"Yes sir," I said, to the customer, "Can I help you?"

"Do you sell firewood here?" he asked.

"Yes sir," I said, pointing to a bundle sitting by the front door of the station, "Just fifty cents per bundle."

"I'll take one please," he said.

I gave him the bundle and took his money, then he left.

I realized that I'd just sold the last bundle, so I strolled around to the back of the station where the wood pile was and began chopping wood. I put the wedge into place and took a mighty swing. "THUD" went the hammer as it smashed into the block of wood, completely missing the wedge.

I heard a laugh, turning, I saw it was the old man again.

"I-I s-saw that," he laughed.

"I never was any good at this," I stated.

"Here let me show y-you," he said.

He picked up the hammer, and gingerly swung it over his head and struck the wedge dead center.

"Wow," I said. "You're pretty good at that."

"I-I should be, he said. "When I was your age I was working in a lumber camp. We used to chop more wood in one day than you could even imagine."

This was the first time I had really gotten a good look at him. His hair was all matted and he was completely toothless. He was wrinkled from head to foot, he looked like an albino prune.

"Yeah, those were the good old days," he was saying. "When my wife," he paused, and a tear rolled down his cheek, "when my wife and I were first married."

"Are you still in school?" he asked.

"No.," I said, "I graduated about two months ago."

"Would you believe I was a college man?" he inquired. "Well," he said, "I was once, but I ran out of money and had to quit."

"How long ago was that?" I asked.

"Oh, about thirty-five years ago," he replied, "when I was about twenty years old or so."

"Egad," I thought to myself. "He looks like he is seventy or so!"

"Where is your family now?" I inquired.

"Oh, I have two daughters here in town, but their husbands don't like me," he said. "Every time I go to see them, their husbands force me to leave. They say I'm a bad influence on their kids; I'm a grandfather, you know."

"Didn't you ever have any sons?" I asked.

"I did have one son," he said, as another tear rolled down his cheek. "We used to hunt and fish together. We really got along well."

"What happened to him?" I inquired.

"W-w-well," he stammered, "Oh-oh ah w-we were out f-fer a-a w-walk. He dared me to walk across a r-rail road tressel. I t-told h-him th-that I w-would if h-he would. I-I m-made it across j-just f-fine, b-but h-he d-didn-t. He f-fell and b-broke h-his n-neck."

The old man was stammering and shaking like a leaf in the wind. He finally sat down, and after a while, he got back up. He stumbled back to his car, took a big swallow of wine, and drove off.

I walked back into the gas station.

"What did the old wino want this time?" laughed Steve.

"Oh nothing really," I said. "He only wanted some one to talk to."

"Oh really," mimicked Steve. "If you ask me, he looks like the kind of old fool who only drinks because h's too darn lazy to do anything else."

Tom Farrow

Steve and Bill then grinned at each other, congratulating each other for being such fine judges of character.

Just then another customer pulled in, and as usual, "Tom, will you get this one, I'm busy right now." As I walked out the door I could hear Steve saying, "hey, remember at Jack's last party, when I got really bombed and told Pat off. That was really cool wasn't it."



Rita Hoppe

I NEED A FRIEND

Paul Tinsley

There is that old man with the cane
The old man that walks so slowly
Planting the cane and taking another step
The man with white hair and that old cane
The old cane that is brown and scratched
The old cane that is splintered and taped

I'll buy it from him, I need a friend.

COME

Kathy Nelson

I stand alone
among the rocks
in the way of the ocean's waves
as they rush contently towards shore.

Quietly surrounded by peace
I smoke a cigarette
and play my guitar
into the wind
of free enchantment.

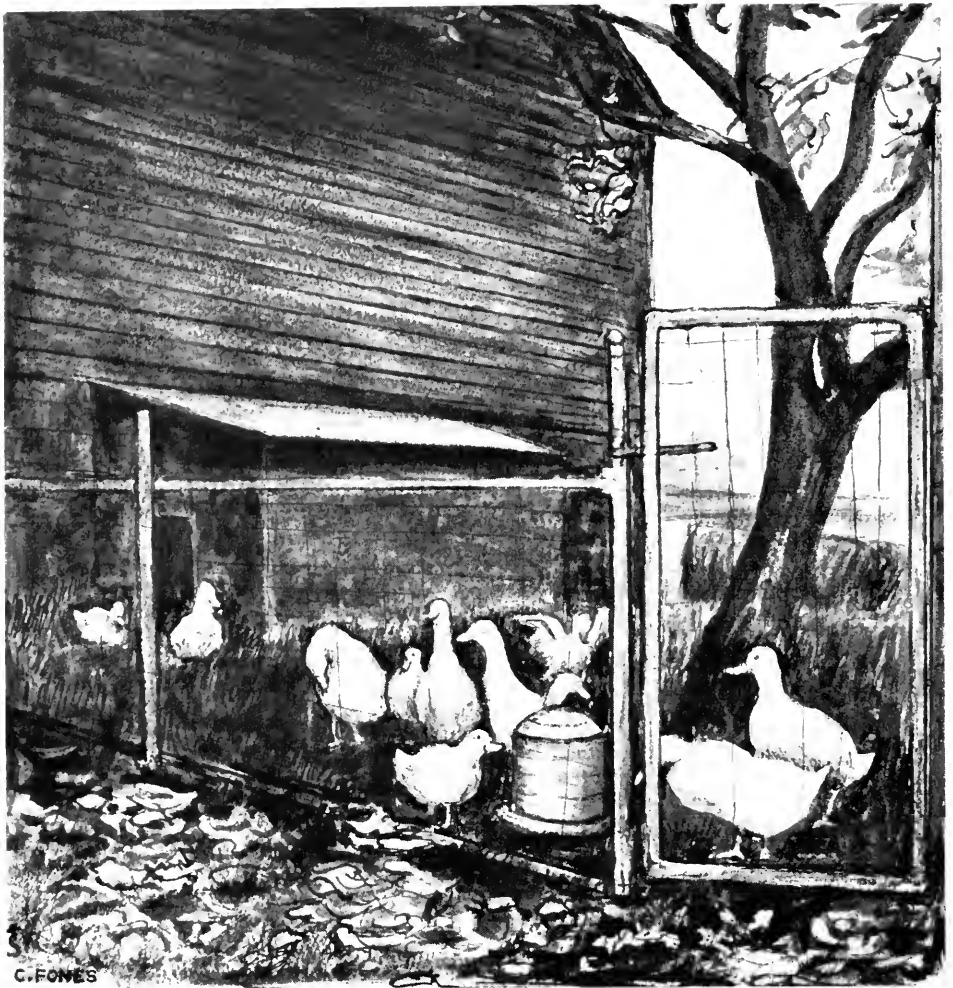
Until a voice
breaks the silence
of my soul
and beckons me harshly - - -

Come

I am forced to walk away,
to leave.
But I have to look back - - -

The waves still drift upon the rocks
where my feet held me,
the waves still lap skillfully
all movement is natural
and still so peaceful

Except me.



Casiena Fones

LOVE AND THE PASSING OF TIME

Cecil Anderson

In the meadowlands
two lovers walk hand in hand
and share its beauty.

Between two rocks
as they look, time only knocks;
a blade of grass struggles to grow.

With the passing of time
will they together along life's rocky pathway climb,
or will their love only wilt away?

HURT

Sir Roger Ernest Rhodes

Can you love hate,
or run sitting down.

That's just as easy
as flying on the ground.

The sane are sick,
and the living are dead.

Our hearts are bloody,
my blood is red.



Rita Hoppe

THE AUDIENCE

William H. Karr, III

You, sir, are a person,
Of that you may be proud.

Living is your purpose,
Happiness your goal.

To be useful is your quest,
Success your wish.

Care not that your braces of steel and crutches of wood
Place you on a stage with the world as your audience.

See not the multitude of questioners
That surround you.

For you, sir, are a person;
Of that you may be proud.

SHE'S THE FIRST SONG

Randy Shives

She's the first song that I ever sang
Accompanying bells that on an August rang
Cascade waters of juniper haze
Silent love-nights, musical love-days.

To me she is everything that is gold
Nearness, warmth - distance, cold
I remember foggy days gone slipping by
When I "n'er" stopped and asked myself, why?

I've had my day - I will have my days
What songs she sings - I'm an unfreed slave
If I were asked - what of another?
I would simply reply - I love no other!

As all songs must come to an end
The heavens would know it would be the end
For I've warned myself to realize
That's when my heart-aches begin.



John Berry

CHILDE OF THE WIND

Bonne Brooks

I am the childe of the wind.
Not of the sun or of fire or sea.
Born in winter of a gust from the North,
I blew open the flowers of Spring.
And I breathed my sunny breath
through the open plains in Summer,
gracing the slender grain with golden
waves of movement.
Ah! but in Autumn I excel.
I hurry windy streamers of my soul
through the dazzling, colorful treetops
in God's own country.
I quicken the intense heat of color
to a deadened, crackling brown.
And return once again to my birthplace, Winter.
Yes, I am the childe born of the wind,
and my love is as strong as tree-bending gusts,
as open and abundant as the sun and the wind,
but no easier to hold than a fleeting
summer breeze.

SOMEONE IS KILLING ME

Michael H. Cook

I am dying--I am dying,
I live in the last hour to think.
From here to Heaven is a scar,
My veins are getting bigger.
They say it is healing, but I do not feel it.
All of me will be gone soon except silence,
Seas from clouds will wash off my ashes,
My body will be scraps of black and white powder,
held together by jelly and juice.
I am afraid, embarrassed too.
I can fool my friends about the way it ends,
But I cannot fool myself.
Oh take your head in your hands,
and come with me my friend.
I must escape.
Come now, take my hand,
you can be my friend,
soon in another country.



Jean Borsche

HAIKU AT THE WATER'S EDGE

Joe Ravitts

Frogs in a clear pond
Lie lazy, the while thinking
Cool green water-thoughts.

Dragonflies above,
Silent, light as butterflies,
Chasing mosquitoes.

October leaves fall
From trees down to mirror-pond:
Now are dainty boats.

AS I WALK

Michael H. Cook

As I walk among trees of beechen green,
And of shadows numberless with the songfest of spring aloud.

The scented, damp earth fills my nostrils,
With the dewy aroma of a musty rathskeller.

I come upon a familiar but forgotten sight,
That interrupts my aimless daydreaming.

One small tombstone stands before me,
Weatherbeaten, faded, and covered by leaves.

It is like a waking dream to my eyes,
For once, a long time ago, I had visited here.

Not to daydream my way through the wood,
But to entomb one I had loved: My Mother.

As my eyes gaze upon the faded scripture,
I, Once again, can see her delicate face frailed by sickness.

I was a lad of three at the time,
When nature deprived me of my maternal affection.

I can still see father praying, bending over her bed,
As his hope grew dim as time expanded.

To me this marker is a page of a book,
The cursory, unfinished book of my life.

This page shall forever be imbedded within my mind,
As she shall, forever, resting in peace.

And, perhaps some day I shall visit this place again,
To return to this small marker amongst the wood.



J. Hays

DIRECTIONS

Jeff Swanberg

Gushing forth,
The fountains drops climb into the bright day.
They fall and join the pond at its base.
There they will remain until they cease to exist.

Having no say on placement,
The wind decides their placement in life;
Landing in the shadows to be plagued by cold,
Landing in the sun to be received by warmth.

Life is short,
But the moment after spewing forth,
Their course is set to follow.
The drops are left to the mercy of the wind.

LOST

Sir Roger Ernest Rhodes

Born to live,
live for what.

I'm scared to live,
no guts to die.

Nothing to live for,
nothing to die for.

No god nor idol,
say go scratch.

Society stinks,
while an answer I will seek.



Terrence L. Lenhart

WHY DID SHE WAIT, OH WHY?

Mike Burns

She was badly hurt they say,
Like the precious flower who is
Cut off from the loving warmth
Of the sun and gentle life
Of water.

But it was spring

And her petaled cheeks still
Held their beauty. It's not too
Late she thought, there's still
Plenty of time.

Then it was summer

Her form paled, but only slightly
I will be loved again she vowed,
And like the flower, also vowed
Never to be hurt again, never to
Stretch her leafy limbs to the sun
Of love only to find it has set behind
The hills of hate.

Then it was fall

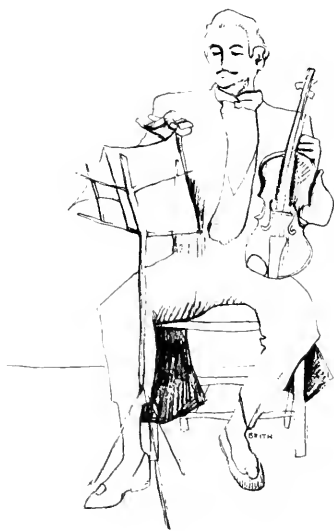
And the cold winds of age blew.
The flower shivered, trying
Desperately to retain her March
Beauty. Someone will come, I have
Not been forgotten.

But then it was winter

And the burial snows fell
Softly on the garden



Daphine McKinney



Anne Langsholt

IN MEMORY

Tamara A. Kletecka

The Cycle involves the most, the least,
The best and the worst in us.
Playing a game in this life we seek fulfillment.
Only the painful memory remains for the living
While the dead have the serene fulfillment.
Yet, they leave us no clues
Nor cures for our increasing pain.
We look on, afraid of the void which
Envelops us so quickly.
A place is left waiting and aching but no ointment
Flows and no help is foreshadowed.
Our hearts want to cry and drain the surging
Storm from within, but we remain numb.
Tears will not bring back life,
His flame has flickered into nothingness.

The streets blaze and glare on
While the living scurry into their holes
Celebrating their week-ends unknowingly
Indifference is as cold and unfeeling as
His blackened charred wick.

The Cycle does not stop...we have no choice.
Perhaps we cry with envy for our chains have not
Yet been broken, and we still must seek the
Light through the murk.
It burns dimly through the suffocation of the
Gasses and masses of our whirling planet,
With its bribing and gibing,
The sloths, the pay-offs,
The fetid odor of minks,
The blinding falsity of the glittering Gold God...
All occupying a place in our Cycle.

Perhaps his light was given too freely
And grew tired of being borrowed and oxidized.
Perhaps now we the living benefit from his sparks,
Perhaps now he has fulfillment and rests
In the brilliant aurora of Utopia.



Gary Lau

WHY NOT ME?

Terry Hall

Oh, it was a terrible and bloody
sight,

It started at 3:50 that dreadful
afternoon,

And its effects were felt throughout
the night.

It's funny how afterwards the stars
dared appear with a full moon.

Thank God for those in or around
that center room,

For those outside it, it meant
their doom.

It happens somewhere else and it's
horrible to see,

But you say: It won't ever happen
to me.

Now before a storm when it begins
to thunder,

All you can do is think and wonder.

The next time the dark clouds gather
and the wind begins to blow,

You'll take no chances.

You head for shelter because now
you know.

Through the wreckage and rubble
they still do search,

Looking for someone-anyone who
still may lurk.

And a childless parent looks to
heaven and asks: Why not me?



Sue Riesinger



David Hoel



Thomas Darden



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